



**The role of most recent and overall scuba diving experience for willingness to pay for improved underwater diving characteristics
the case of Sipadan, Borneo**

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Diana Emang

Title:

The role of most recent and overall scuba diving experience for willingness to pay for improved underwater diving characteristics: The case of Sipadan, Borneo.

Abstract:

This study presents the economic analysis of diver perceptions and experiences at a scuba diving spot in Borneo, Malaysia. The study applies choice modelling to discover divers' willingness to pay (WTP) for various characteristics of the diving experience, including conservation status of coral reefs. The role of the divers' most recent diving experience for their valuation is analyzed. Sipadan Marine Park at Borneo has been chosen as the case study. Sipadan is highly regarded among avid scuba divers as one of the top diving attractions with an outstanding marine biodiversity. In this study, we identified five main characteristics relevant for divers: litter pollution levels in the water, number of divers in the dive, coral cover, fish diversity and daily permit fee. These characteristics were outlined into choice experiment in a survey questionnaire and a number of divers were interviewed on site about inter alia their recent diving experience along the same characteristics, their overall experience, and then asked to answer a set of choice sets. We investigate to which extend the most recent experience or overall diving experience tend to influence WTP for improvement in the diving characteristics. Our results may shed light on how the cumulative relative to recent experiences of divers affect their assessment of the characteristics of a diving site, and hence be of value for tourism management aiming to affect lasting impressions and likelihood of returning to the site. The outcome could provide economic evidence for the use in conservation measures and it could be integrated in management policies safeguarding the sustainability use and protection of coral reefs at Sipadan.

Keywords: discrete choice models, coral reefs, conservation, lasting impressions